

International terror defendants face longer prison terms than domestic counterparts, new study finds

By J. DEAREN/M. R. SMITH
Associated Press

People convicted of crimes related to domestic extremism face far shorter prison terms than those convicted in international terrorism cases, even when the crimes are similar, a new report on the outcomes of hundreds of federal criminal cases has found. The first-of-its-kind analysis, completed by terrorism researchers at the University of Maryland, was provided exclusively to The Associated Press. It comes after federal officials and researchers have repeatedly identified domestic violent extremists such as white supremacists and anti-government groups as the most significant terror threat to the U.S. And it follows scrutiny of the outcomes of Jan. 6 cases, including for some Oath Keepers and Proud Boys who received sentences years lower than what was called for by prosecutors and sentencing guidelines.



David Williams, center, is led by police officers from a federal building, May 21, 2009, in New York after being arrested on charges related to a bombing plot with three others in the Bronx.

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President Joe Biden has echoed the concerns about domestic terrorism, calling it a “stain on the soul of America” and the “most urgent terrorism threat” faced by the country, yet the new analysis shows that on average, domestic extremists receive more lenient penalties. “This research is significant in confirming empirically what many have long argued: international terrorism cases are sentenced more harshly than domestic cases, even when the conduct is the same, and that these disparities are due to a combination of differences in the law and biases in implementing them,” said Shirin Sinnar, a professor at Stanford Law School, who was not involved in the research but reviewed it at the request of the AP.

Researchers at the University of Maryland’s National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, or START, and its Center for Health and Homeland Security examined federal criminal cases between 2014 and 2019 that were brought against people radicalized in the U.S. who were pursuing political, social, economic or religious goals.

International terrorism cases were defined by the researchers as those in which the defendants had links to or were acting in support of terrorist groups or movements based outside the U.S., while domestic cases involved defendants connected to groups or movements that operate primarily inside the U.S.

The analysis looked at 344 cases, including 118 international cases and 226 domestic cases, and found the disparities are caused by multiple factors, including the charges federal prosecutors choose to file, the laws that are on the books, as well as the sentencing decisions made by judges. Jan. 6 cases are not included in the analysis, which has not yet been peer reviewed. START’s Michael Jensen, a principal investigator of the



Stewart Rhodes, founder of the Oath Keepers, speaks during a rally outside the White House in Washington, June 25, 2017.

Associated Press

study, said 2019 was chosen as a cutoff to ensure final outcomes of even the most complex cases were captured. Still, he said, sentencing gaps in the Jan. 6 cases that he’s analyzed also reflect this disparity. Federal prosecutors have even taken the rare step of appealing the sentences of some Jan. 6 defendants, including leaders of the Oath Keepers and Proud Boys, some of whose sentences were years below what federal sentencing guidelines had laid out. START’s analysis found wide disparities in prison terms for similar conduct, which were most pronounced in certain kinds of cases. The largest was in cases where defendants plotted violent attacks that ultimately failed or were foiled, where international defendants received an average prison sentence of 11.2 years, compared with 1.6 years for domestic defendants.

For violent cases that led to injuries, domestic defendants received on average 8.6 years, versus 34.6 for international defendants. The disparity was smaller, but still significant, in violent fatal attacks with domestic cases at about 28.8 years and international cases at about 39.2 years. Even terms of supervision after prison showed differences, with people

charged in domestic cases getting an average of 3.5 years, compared with more than 19 years supervision for international terrorism defendants. The researchers at START point out that this is despite evidence that the recidivism rate is about 50 percent for domestic extremists — about the same rate for all federal offenders — and “vanishingly low” for international terror defendants. START controlled for factors already known to contribute to sentencing disparities, such as race, gender, criminal history and the use of so-called sentencing enhancements that increase the possible prison time for certain crimes. Even accounting for these other factors, international defendants still receive harsher punishments on average. Pete Simi, a Chapman University sociologist who has studied extremism for decades, said the imbalance in treatment of domestic and international cases reflects differences in the broader criminal justice system.

Federal law makes a distinction between international and domestic terrorism. The State Department has formally designated dozens of groups operating abroad as foreign terror organizations and even marginal support to such groups that doesn’t

result in violence can be punishable by up to 20 years in prison. There is no comparable designation for domestic extremists such as the Proud Boys, Atomwaffen or other groups with a history of violent plots and acts. Sinnar, who has written extensively about terrorism cases, said the disparities are indicative of numerous biases throughout the criminal justice system.

“At least for Muslims, many cases that might be labeled ‘failed or foiled’ plots were likely plots generated by government informants trying to goad individuals into crimes in the first place, and then foil them in order to arrest the supposed perpetrators,” Sinnar wrote in response to AP questions.

“It’s exactly in these ‘preventative’ cases where you would expect to see the biggest differences — as opposed to the rarer cases that actually lead to fatalities, in which homicide charges are available regardless of the international/domestic distinction.”

Indeed, a federal judge in March freed three men convicted in a post-9/11 terrorism sting after deeming their lengthy sentences “unduly harsh and unjust.” The judge decried the FBI’s role in radicalizing them in a plot to blow up New York

synagogues and shoot down National Guard planes, and reduced their mandatory minimum 25-year prison sentences imposed in 2011 to time served plus 90 days. In the cases studied, terrorism-specific charges and sentencing enhancements that increase prison time were disproportionately applied to international defendants. Chief among those is the material support statute that can only be used for cases linked to international terrorist groups; a related statute that may be used for domestic terrorism was rarely invoked. Federal prosecutors used the international material support charge in 50 percent of international cases; it was just half a percent in domestic ones — a single case.

People charged in violent domestic cases also often faced less serious charges not often associated with crimes of terror, like illegal possession of firearms, the study found. The so-called terror enhancement that increases prison time was used in 60 percent of international cases, compared with just 15.4 percent in domestic ones.

George Varghese, a former national security prosecutor, said prosecutors had been hamstrung by how the law treats international terror differently than domestic extremism, but that courts also bear some responsibility. “These domestic terrorists are being treated more like run-of-the-mill criminal defendants and receiving sentences far below those of international terrorism defendants,” he said.

One judge, U.S. District Judge Timothy Kelly, imposed terms years below the federal guidelines when he sentenced Proud Boys including ex-national chairman Enrique Tarrio and another leader, Zachary Rehl, both of whom were convicted of seditious conspiracy. The judge said at Rehl’s sentencing that he had assaulted law enforcement by spraying a chemical irritant at them, then lied about it at trial. □

Mike Johnson, a staunch conservative from Louisiana, is elected House speaker with broad GOP support

By LISA MASCARO, STEPHEN GROVES, FARNOUSH AMIRI and KEVIN FREKING
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans unanimously elected Rep. Mike Johnson as House speaker on Wednesday, eagerly elevating a deeply conservative but lesser-known leader to the major seat of U.S. power and ending for now the weeks of political chaos in their majority.

Johnson, 51, of Louisiana, swept through on the first ballot with support from all Republicans anxious to put the past weeks of tumult behind and get on with the business of governing. He was quickly sworn into office, second in line to the presidency.

"The people's House is back in business," Johnson declared after taking the gavel.

A lower-ranked member of the House GOP leadership team, Johnson emerged as the fourth Republican nominee in what had become an almost absurd cycle of political infighting since Kevin McCarthy's ouster as GOP factions jockeyed for power. While not the party's top choice for the gavel, the deeply religious and even-keeled Johnson has few foes and an important GOP backer: Donald Trump.

"I think he's gonna be a fantastic speaker," Trump said Wednesday at the New York courthouse where the former president, who is now the Republican front-runner for president in 2024, is on trial over a lawsuit alleging business fraud.

Three weeks on without a House speaker, the Republicans have been wasting their majority status a maddening embarrassment to some, democracy in action to others, but not at all how the House is expected to function.

President Joe Biden congratulated the new speaker and said it's "time for all of us to act responsibly" with challenges ahead to



Rep. Mike Johnson, R-La., takes the oath to be the new House speaker from the Dean of the House Rep. Hal Rogers, R-Ky., at the Capitol in Washington, Wednesday, Oct. 25, 2023.

Associated Press

fund the government and provide aid for Ukraine and Israel.

"We need to move swiftly," the president said.

In the House, far-right members had refused to accept a more traditional speaker, and moderate conservatives didn't want a hard-liner. While Johnson had no opponents during a private party roll call late Tuesday, some two dozen Republicans did not vote, more than enough to sink his nomination.

But when GOP Conference Chair Rep. Elise Stefanik rose to introduce Johnson's name Wednesday as their nominee, Republicans jumped to their feet for a standing ovation.

"House Republicans and Speaker Mike Johnson will never give up," she said.

Democrats again nominated their leader Rep. Hakeem Jeffries of New York, criticizing Johnson as an architect of Trump's legal effort to overturn the 2020 presidential election he lost to Democrat Biden.

With Republicans controlling the House only 221-212 over Democrats, Johnson could afford just a few detractors to win the gavel. He won 220-209, with a few

absences.

Jeffries said House Democrats will find "common ground" work with Republicans whenever possible for the "good of the country." Lawmakers were quickly reconvening in what has been a shuttered chamber to consider a House resolution in support of Israel in the war against Hamas.

Overnight the endorsements for Johnson started pouring in, including from failed speaker hopefuls. Rep. Jim Jordan, the hard-charging Judiciary Committee chairman, gave his support, as did Majority Leader Steve Scalise, the fellow Louisiana congressman, who stood behind Johnson after he won the nomination.

"Mike! Mike! Mike!" lawmakers chanted at a press conference after the late-night internal vote, surrounding Johnson and posing for selfies in a show of support.

Anxious and exhausted, Republican lawmakers are desperately trying to move on.

Johnson's rise comes after a tumultuous month, capped by a head-spinning Tuesday that within a span of a few hours saw one can-

didate, Rep. Tom Emmer, the GOP Whip, nominated and then quickly withdraw when it became clear he would be the third candidate unable to secure enough support from GOP colleagues after Trump bashed his nomination.

"He wasn't MAGA," said Trump, referring to his Make America Great Again campaign slogan.

Attention quickly turned to Johnson. A lawyer specializing in constitutional issues, Johnson had rallied Republicans around Trump's legal effort to overturn the 2020 election results.

Elevating Johnson to speaker gives Louisianians two high-ranking GOP leaders, putting him above Scalise, who was rejected by hard-liners in his own bid as speaker.

Johnson is affable and well liked, and colleagues swiftly started giving him their support.

The congressman, who drew on his Christian beliefs, said to the American people watching: "Our mission here is to serve you well and to restore the people's faith in this House."

Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Fla., who led a small band of hard-liners to engineer Mc-

Carthy's ouster at the start of the month, posted on social media that "Mike Johnson won't be the Speaker the Swamp wants but, he is the Speaker America needs."

Republicans have been flailing all month, unable to conduct routine business as they fight amongst themselves with daunting challenges ahead.

The federal government risks a shutdown in a matter of weeks if Congress fails to pass funding legislation by a Nov. 17 deadline to keep services and offices running. More immediately, President Biden has asked Congress to provide \$105 billion in aid to help Israel and Ukraine amid their wars and to shore up the U.S. border with Mexico. Federal aviation and farming programs face expiration without action.

Many hard-liners have been resisting a leader who voted for the budget deal that McCarthy struck with Biden earlier this year, which set federal spending levels that far-right Republicans don't agree with and now want to undo. They are pursuing steeper cuts to federal programs and services with next month's funding deadline.

Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia said she wanted assurances the candidates would pursue impeachment inquiries into Biden and other top Cabinet officials.

In all, some 15 congressmen, but no women, competed for the gavel over the past several weeks.

During the turmoil, the House was led by a speaker pro tempore, Rep. Patrick McHenry, R-N.C., the bow tie-wearing chairman of the Financial Services Committee. His main job was to elect a more permanent speaker.

Some Republicans and Democrats wanted to give McHenry more power to get on with the routine business of governing. □

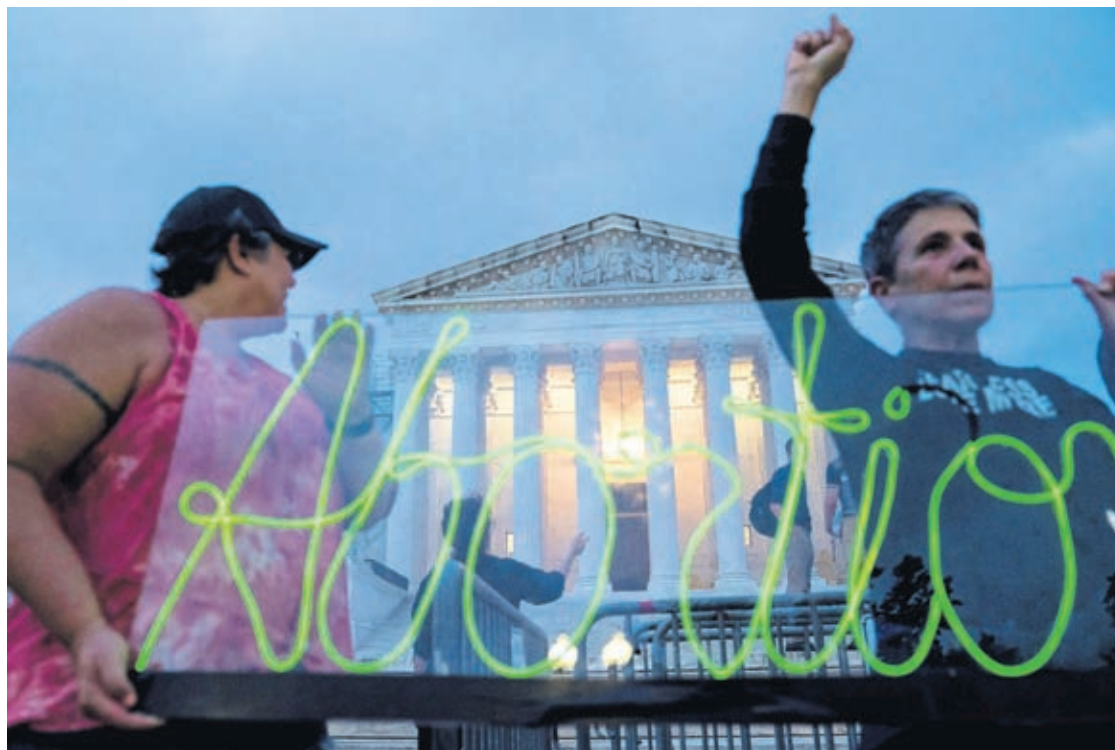
Abortions in the U.S. rose slightly overall after post-Roe restrictions were put in place, study finds

By **GEOFF MULVIHILL**
Associated Press

The total number of abortions provided in the U.S. rose slightly in the 12 months after states began implementing bans on them throughout pregnancy, a new survey finds.

The report out this week from the Society of Family Planning, which advocates for abortion access, shows the number fell to nearly zero in states with the strictest bans but rose elsewhere, especially in states close to those with the bans. The monthly averages overall from July 2022 through June 2023 were about 200 higher than in May and June 2022.

The changes reflect major shifts after the U.S. Supreme Court in June 2022 handed down its *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* ruling, overturning *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 ruling that had made abortion legal nationally. Since last year, most Republican-controlled states have enacted restrictions, while



Activists mark the first anniversary of the Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, by displaying neon signage in support of abortion access in front of the Supreme Court on June 23, 2023, in Washington.

most Democrat-controlled states have extended protections for those from out of state seeking abortion. "The *Dobbs* decision turned abortion access in this country upside down," Alison Norris, a co-chair for the

study, known as WeCount, and a professor at The Ohio State University's College of Public Health, said in a statement. "The fact that abortions increased overall in the past year shows what happens when abor-

tion access is improved, and some previously unmet need for abortion is met." But she noted that bans make access harder and sometimes impossible for some people. Meanwhile, an anti-abor-

tion group celebrated that the number of abortions in states with the tightest restrictions declined by nearly 115,000. "WeCount's report confirms pro-life protections in states are having a positive impact," Tessa Longbons, a senior researcher for the Charlotte Lozier Institute, said in a statement.

Abortion bans and restrictions are consistently met with court challenges, and judges have put some of them on hold. Currently, laws are being enforced in 14 states that bar abortion throughout pregnancy, with limited exceptions, and two more that ban it after cardiac activity can be detected usually around six weeks of gestational age and before many women realize they're pregnant.

In all, abortions provided by clinics, hospitals, medical offices and virtual-only clinics rose by nearly 200 a month nationally from July 2022 through June 2023 compared with May and June 2022. □

USPS touts crackdown on postal crime, carrier robberies, with hundreds of arrests

By **DAVID SHARP**
Associated Press

With mail theft and postal carrier robberies up, law enforcement officials have made more than 600 arrests since May in a crackdown launched to address crime that includes carriers being accosted at gunpoint for their antiquated universal keys, the Postal Service announced Wednesday. Criminals are both stealing mail and targeting carriers' so-called "arrow keys" to get access to mailboxes.

"We will continue to turn up the pressure and put potential perpetrators on notice: If you're attacking postal employees, if you steal the mail or commit other postal crimes, postal inspectors will bring you to justice," Chief Postal Inspector Gary Barksdale told reporters on

Wednesday.

The Postal Service announcement on Wednesday came against a backdrop of rallies by the National Association of Letter Carriers calling for better protection of carriers and

harsh punishment for criminals who rob them. They've been held across the country in recent months, including one Tuesday in Denver and another Wednesday in Houston. "Postal carriers have to keep their head on

a swivel. They have to take precautions to be extra vigilant with their surroundings," Rick Byrne, president of the Colorado State Association of Letter Carriers, said Wednesday.

Letter carriers are on edge after nearly 500 of them were robbed last year. Criminals increasingly targeted the mail to commit financial crimes like altering checks to obtain money. Postmaster General Louis DeJoy said in a statement that it's important to protect the "sanctity of the nation's mail" but that his top priority is the safety of those delivering it.

To reduce robberies, the Postal Service is in the process of replacing tens of thousands of postal carriers' universal keys that are sought by criminals seek-

ing to steal mail to commit check fraud, officials said. So far, 6,500 of the keys have been replaced with electronic locks in select cities, and another 42,500 are set to be deployed, officials said. The Postal Service has declined to say how many of the arrow keys are in service.

To prevent mail theft, the Postal Service also has deployed more than 10,000 high-security blue boxes in high-risk locations to prevent people from breaking into them.

The Postal Service also implemented changes that reduced fraudulent change-of-a-address transactions by 99.3% over the past fiscal year, and they've reduced counterfeit postage by 50%, as well, officials said. □



A United States Postal Service mailbox stands along Bonnie Brae Boulevard Monday, Aug. 17, 2020, in southeast Denver. Associated Press

Carnival ruled negligent over cruise where 662 passengers got COVID-19 early in pandemic

By **ROD McGUIRK**
Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP)

— A cruise operator that failed to cancel a voyage from Sydney that led to a major COVID-19 outbreak was ruled negligent in its duty of care to passengers in an Australian class-action case Wednesday.

The Ruby Princess ocean liner left Sydney on March 8, 2020, with 2,671 passengers aboard for a 13-day cruise to New Zealand but returned in 11 days as Australia's borders were closing. COVID-19 spread to 663 passengers and claimed 28 lives.

Passenger Susan Karpik was the lead plaintiff in the case against British-American cruise operator Carnival and its subsidiary Princess Cruises, the ship's owner. Federal Court Justice Angus Stewart ruled that Carnival had been negligent as defined by Australian consumer law by allowing the cruise to depart in the early months of the pandemic. He said Carnival had a duty to take reasonable care of her health and safety in regard to COVID-19.



Susan Karpik speaks to media outside the Federal Court in Sydney, Wednesday, Oct. 25, 2023.

Associated Press

"I have found that before the embarkation of passengers on the Ruby Princess for the cruise in question, the respondents knew or ought to have known about the heightened risk of coronavirus infection on the vessel and its potentially lethal consequences and that their procedures for screening passengers and crew members for the

virus were unlikely to screen out all infectious individuals," Stewart said. Carnival had already experienced outbreaks on its cruises in the previous month aboard the Grand Princess off California and the Diamond Princess off Japan, the judge said. Carnival had failed to explain why it offered free cancellation for all cruises

worldwide leaving from March 9 the day after the Ruby Princess departed and suspended all cruises on March 13, he said. "To the respondents' knowledge, to proceed with the cruise carried significant risk of a coronavirus outbreak with possible disastrous consequences, yet they proceeded regardless," Stewart said.

Susan Karpik had sued Carnival for more than 360,000 Australian dollars (\$230,000).

However, she was only awarded her out-of-pocket medical expenses of AU\$4,423.48 (\$2,823.28) for reasons including that the judge did not accept she suffered from long COVID and that Carnival had refunded all the passengers' fares.

But she said she was happy with the outcome.

"I was very pleased with that finding. And I hope the other passengers are pleased with that finding too," she told reporters outside court.

"I hope the finding brings some comfort to them because they've all been through the mill and back," she added.

Her lawyer Vicky Antzoulatos said other passengers who suffered worse consequences from their sickness could expect larger payouts.

While Susan Karpik's symptoms were relatively mild, her husband Henry Karpik spent two months in hospital and almost died from his infection. □

Israel accuses U.N. chief of justifying terrorism for saying Hamas attack 'didn't happen in a vacuum'

by **AMY TEIBEL**
Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli officials were outraged Wednesday over U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' comment that the deadly Hamas attack on southern Israel "did not happen in a vacuum," calling it justification for terrorism. Foreign Minister Eli Cohen canceled a scheduled meeting with Guterres while Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust memorial, said the U.N. chief "failed the test."

"I will not meet with the UN secretary-general. After the October 7 massacre, there is no place for a balanced approach. Hamas

must be erased off the face of the planet!" Cohen posted Tuesday on social

platform X, formerly known as Twitter. Israel's envoy to the U.N. Gi-



United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres speaks during a Security Council meeting at United Nations headquarters, Tuesday, Oct. 24, 2023.

Associated Press

lad Erdan called for his resignation, saying Israel must rethink its relations with the world body.

"We will refuse to grant visas to U.N. representatives. We have already refused to give one to Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths," Erdan told Army Radio, accusing Guterres of justifying a slaughter. "It's time to teach them a lesson." Israel historically has had tense relations with the U.N., accusing it of being biased against it.

On Tuesday, Guterres addressed a special Security Council meeting on the Israel-Hamas war that was sparked by the mili-

tant group's Oct. 7 attack, which left at least 1,400 Israelis dead, and more than 220 taken hostage.

Israeli airstrikes have destroyed large swaths of the Gaza enclave, leaving at least 6,500 Palestinians killed, including over 2,700 children, according to the Hamas-run Health Ministry. The U.N. chief told the council that he "condemned unequivocally the horrifying and unprecedented 7 October acts of terror by Hamas in Israel."

"Nothing can justify the deliberate killing, injuring and kidnapping of civilians or the launching of rockets against civilian targets," he said. □

Leader of Lebanon's Hezbollah holds talks with senior Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad figures

By KAREEM CHEHAYEB
Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — The leader of Lebanon's Hezbollah group held talks on Wednesday in Beirut with senior Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad figures in a key meeting of three top anti-Israel militant groups amid the war raging in Gaza.

In neighboring Syria, meanwhile, state media said an Israeli airstrike hit the international airport in the northern city of Aleppo on Wednesday, damaging its runway and putting it out of service. There was no immediate comment from Israel on the reported strike. Following the meeting in Lebanon, a brief statement said Hezbollah's leader Hassan Nasrallah agreed with Hamas' Saleh al-Aroui and Islamic Jihad's leader Ziad al-Nakhleh on the next steps that the three along with other Iran-backed militants should take at this "sensitive stage" in the Middle East.

Their goal, according to the statement carried on Hezbollah-run and Lebanese state media, was to achieve "a real victory for the resistance in Gaza and Palestine" and halt Israel's



In this photo released on Wednesday, Oct. 25, 2023, by the Hezbollah Media Relations Office, Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, right, meets with Ziad al-Nakhleh, the head of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, center, and Hamas deputy chief, Saleh al-Aroui, in Beirut, Lebanon.

Associated Press

"treacherous and brutal aggression against our oppressed and steadfast people in Gaza and the West Bank". No other details were provided. The meeting came as the war between Israel and Hamas, the Palestinian militant group that rules the Gaza Strip, is now in its third week. The fighting, triggered by Hamas' deadly incursion into Israel

on Oct. 7 that killed more than 1,400 people in Israel, has killed more than 5,700 Palestinians in Gaza. As the Gaza death toll spirals, tensions have also been rising along the tense Lebanon-Israel border, where Hezbollah members have been exchanging fire with Israeli troops since the day after Hamas' rampage into Israel. For now, those ex-

changes remain limited to a handful of border towns and Hezbollah and Israeli military positions on both sides. Lebanese army soldiers and United Nations peacekeeping forces have deployed in large numbers. Dozens of Hezbollah fighters have been killed in the clashes so far, the group says, while the Israeli military has also announced some

deaths among its ranks. Nasrallah has yet to publicly speak about the war in Gaza and clashes along the Lebanon-Israel border. However, other Hezbollah top officials have warned Israel against its planned ground invasion into the besieged territory.

Israeli officials have said they would retaliate aggressively in case of a cross-border attack by Hezbollah from Lebanon.

"We will cripple it with a force it cannot even imagine, and the consequences for it and the Lebanese state (will be) devastating," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said while visiting Israeli troops along the border with Lebanon on Sunday.

Lebanon's cash-strapped caretaker government, along regional and international figures, has been scrambling to keep the country out of the war.

Hezbollah and Israel fought a monthlong war in 2006 that ended in a tense stalemate. Israel sees Iran-backed Hezbollah as its most serious threat, estimating it has some 150,000 rockets and missiles aimed at Israel. □

In the Amazon, communities next to the world's most voluminous river are queuing for water



A resident of a riverside community carries a container of drinking water from an aid distribution due to the ongoing drought in Careiro da Varzea, Amazonas state, Brazil, Tuesday, Oct. 24, 2023.

Associated Press

By EDMAR BARROS
Associated Press

CAREIRO DA VARZEA, Brazil (AP) — As the Amazon drought rages on, public authorities in Brazil are scrambling to deliver food and water to thousands of isolated communities throughout a vast and roadless territory, where boats are the only means of transportation.

Across Amazonas state, which has a territory the size of three Californias, 59 out of its 62 municipalities are under state of emergency, impacting 633,000 people. In the capital Manaus, Negro River a

major tributary of the Amazon has reached its lowest level since official measurements began 121 years ago.

One of the most impacted cities is Careiro da Varzea, near Manaus by the Amazon River. On Tuesday, the municipality distributed emergency kits using an improvised barge originally designed to transport cattle.

The Associated Press accompanied the delivery to two communities. It docked miles away from them, requiring residents, most of them small farmers and fishermen, to walk long

distances through former riverbeds turned into endless sand banks and mud. Each family received a basic food package and 20 liters (5.3 gallons) of water, enough for just a few days but a heavy burden to carry under the scorching heat.

"I will have to carry the food package on my back for half an hour," Moisés Batista de Souza, a small farmer from Sao Lazaro community, told the AP. He said the biggest problem is getting drinkable water. To reach the closest source demands a long walk from his house. □

Papiamento words and phrases you may want to know!

(Oranjestad)—Aruba is a potting melt of different nationalities, cultures and languages. Primarily for this reason, the average Aruban can understand and speak Dutch, English and Spanish relatively well. However, as much as we pride ourselves in being able to communicate with almost everyone, we cherish our native tongue Papiamento above all else. Want to learn some common words in our language? Here are a few basic words and phrases that can get you a hat tip from an Aruban.

When you arrive at the airport in Aruba, one of the first words in Papiamento you may encounter is "Bon bini." Bon bini in Papiamento means welcome, and is probably the most famous Papiamento word for tourists.

Hi! Bye!

To be fair, there is no unique way to say "hello" in Papiamento. At least, not officially. We often just use the English "hello" or "hey", or Dutch "hallo" to greet someone. We do however, always follow it up with "con bay?" or "con ta?" Con bay is a shortened version of "con ta bay?", which essentially means "how are you?"

The word "con" in Papiamento means "how?" and is pronounced



with a rounder "o" sounds, like in the English word "cone". "Ta bay" refers to how you are doing.

When we say goodbye, we use the word "ayo" (not like the Ayo Rock Formation, but also...kinda?). We may also use "te oro", which means "see you later".

Greetings during the day

Most, if not all, languages have different ways to greet according to the time of day, and Papiamento is no different. Since Papiamento is heavily influenced from Portuguese and Spanish, some of these phras-

es may look very familiar.

1. Bon dia is used in the morning, up to about noon. Bon dia essentially means good morning. The word "bon" means "good", and while "dia" does not directly mean "morning" in English, it is used often to refer to the morning time.
2. Bon tardi. In the afternoon to early evening hours, we use "bon tardi" to greet people, which means "good afternoon". "Tardi" actually comes from the word "atardi", which directly translates to "after-

noon". However, the shortened "tardi" is used to keep the rhythm on the phrase. And the same could be said for our last greeting of the day.

3. Bon nochi. You guessed it, "bon nochi" means "good night". Just like "tardi", "nochi" is actually the shortened version of the word "anochi".

Yes...no...maybe?

The affirmative and negative expression is very simple in Papiamento. Just like Spanish, our yeses are "si" and our no's are "no". Pretty easy right? If you want to gain some extra points from younger locals, you can also say "se", which is a more casual affirmative used mostly by the younger generation. However, do note: some older generations may find this improper and not respectful, so keep that in mind.

Thanks man...

Lastly, a word that we can also say more often is "danki", which means literally "thank you". "Danki" is derived from the Dutch word "bedankt". Though we don't really have a translation for "I appreciate it" in English, we do use "masha danki" to convey the message. "Masha" means "a lot" or "very", so "masha danki" means "thank you very much". □

Birds of Aruba



ORANJESTAD — On May 11th, 2010, the Aruba Birdlife Conservation was founded with the aim of protecting the biodiversity in general and birds in and around Aruba in particular.

Among other things, the foundation will focus on increasing the survival chances of species of wild birds by promoting their preservation and conservation. The foundation publishes the most beautiful pictures of local birds on their social media that show us the beauty of Aruba's birds and nature in general. Aruba Today gives you a little peek with the following pictures and descriptions from the foundations Facebook page.



The Great Egret

Serenity in Aruba's National Park, a Great Egret flying in peace. When it is peaceful and quite, beautiful things start happening in nature.

Canadian in the house

The breeding season is over and it's getting pretty cold in North America. Shore birds have started moving southwards as early as July. This wetland beauty wants to keep its toes warm. Our Canadian friends know exactly where they can do so best. A Greater Yellowlegs rediscovering Aruba's Bubali Wetlands.



Cabochon

In its living form of so much more value than any gemstone. Aruba's smallest and most master of flight. A top pollinator. A hovering Blenchi inspecting the human who just entered his territory.

English: Blue-tailed Emerald (male) Dutch: Blauwstaartsmaragdkolibrie (mannetje).

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Rhythms Circus Company Aruba: putting Aruba's name on the world stage



Rhythms Circus Company Aruba is a talented group of young people working daily to present their art in the form of acrobatics, dancing, acting and singing. After an impactful participation in one of America's biggest talent shows, they are now bringing their amazing talent to Aruba!

In a show full of light, music, and with performances to famous musical figures like Elvis Presley, Michael Jackson and Tina Turner, the group consisting of 15 people from various countries delights the audience with their artistic pro-

ess at the Paseo Herencia Mall, every Wednesday and Friday starting at 7pm. Each day has a different show, so you can attend both nights for the complete experience!

The group, under the leadership of directors and creators Diego Jaramillo and Yamila Hernandez are opening the doors to the ballroom to our local audience as well as our visitors so that everyone can have the privilege of experiencing this wonderful show.

Hernandez explained that the

idea for this project started in 2010 when she came to work in Aruba. After being on the island for a while she decided to stay and live here, and she met Diego Jaramillo, who is currently her partner. Together they came with the idea to establish a company together with other professional artists, with the goal of living from their art.

Hernandez says that the work is hard – all of the performers are professional artists, and while the production of the show is not a challenge for them, selling the idea proved difficult since at the time, there weren't any shows of its kind on the island.

America's Got Talent

Currently they are offering a show with music, choreography and at the end, they have a shocking acrobatics ending, one that was seen by thousands of people around the world when the group travelled to Los Angeles in the United States to represent Aruba in America's Got Talent. Hernandez said that the show was very important for them to meet the public present because people could experience this performance live and right before their eyes.



Their presentation in America's Got Talent "was incredible" and they were able to meet the jury and many other artists staying there for three months. But the exhaustion and physical toll was so great that Diego suffered an accident, and because of this, they had to cancel all future commitments.

Reservations and tickets

To make a reservation to see this incredible display of creativity and acrobatics, scan the QR code which will take you directly to their website for a booking. To find more information about RCCA, please visit their Instagram page @rccaruba.



Aruba to me

ORANJESTAD — You are back and we would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island.

Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: news@arubatoday.com and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special way to keep your best moments alive? Please do

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Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every

day again.

For today we received a lovely message from **Sue and Dave Ota** who are visiting us from Gilbert, Arizona.

She wrote to us saying: "Aruba to me is our second home! My husband and I made our eighth visit to Aruba this past August. It is our most favorite vacation spot."

Thank you for sending us this wonderful message sharing what Aru-



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Unique fauna of Aruba

For a small island, Aruba sure has a lot of unique treasures. Among these, we have some subspecies of animals that are unique to our island. These have evolved to perfectly adapt to our desert climate and make Aruba their home. At the same time, they are part of what makes Aruba truly one of a kind.

Cascabel (rattlesnake, *Crotalus durissus unicolor*)

According to the Arikok National Park, Aruba knows two kinds of snakes, the Santanero and the Cascabel. The cascabel belongs to the rattlesnake family. The cascabel is the only venomous snake from Aruba. It has a length of 65cm to 100cm, and is about 4 to 5cm wide. Its color varies from light brown to grey-brown, and its underbelly is white. On its back there are marks that are a little darker, in the shape of diamonds.

Its reproduction is oviparous, meaning the offspring can hatch from their eggs just before, during or immediately after laying.

The cascabel lives mainly in the Arikok National Park. It likes to live in dark places, and is thus found hidden among the limestone rocks and under stones. As a defense mechanism, the cascabel uses its rattle as a warning, and it is not an aggressive animal.

The cascabel feeds on lizards, small mammals such as rats and mice. It paralyzes or kills its prey with its venom, which is injected through a bite. The enemies of the cascabel are donkeys, goats, humans and

cars. Humans are the biggest enemy of the cascabel, as they kill them and destroy their habitat for urbanization.

Shoco (burrowing owl, *Athene cunicularia arubensis*)

The shoco is a small bird which is seldom seen. They are active during the day but are more active later in the day and at night for hunting. These owls have very good night vision and very good hearing. The shoco is the national symbol of Aruba.

The shoco has about 20cm of length, and the females are slightly heavier than the males. They are light brown in color, with many white spots. The belly of the Shoco is either white or light brown, and the shoco has striking yellow eyes. Its beak is yellow/green. Young owls do not have white spots and are lighter in color.

The nest of the shoco is a burrow in the ground. If the shoco cannot find a burrow, it will dig one in soft soil. The shoco lays one or two eggs every other day until all the eggs are laid – a shoco can lay up to four eggs. The first owlets hatch after three to four weeks. The shoco owl takes care of the owlets for three months until they leave the nest. Only a few owlets survive.

The owls dig burrows in the ground with low grass vegetation. An owl can live up to nine years.

Its defense mechanism is simply to fly away or retreat to its burrows. They eat mostly insects, mice and lizards, and

the main threats to their survival are boas – an invasive species introduced by humans as pets – and humans through destruction of their habitat.

Prikichi (parakeet, *Aratinga pertinax*)

The Prikichi is the national bird of Aruba. On Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao, parakeets can be found, but each of the three islands has a different breed. The Yellow-shouldered Amazon parakeet that we have on Aruba is also found along the coast of Venezuela. Unfortunately, there is interbreeding between the breeds due to cage birds from, for example, Curaçao being released on Aruba. The parakeet population on Aruba is in danger due to extensive deforestation occurring on the island because of the growing population.

The prikichi weighs between 90 to 100 grams. It has a greenish-brown head with some yellow around the eye. The back and wings of the parakeet are dark green, and the underside of the body is a lighter shade of green. There is also a bit of blue in the wings. The parakeet's beak is gray/black.

Parakeets often use termite nests as breeding sites. Parakeets are found in all natural environments (mondi) of the island. It defends itself by flying away and loud cries. Parakeets eat seeds from the pods of the Kwihi tree, Divi Divi, and columnar cactus. They also consume natural fruits. Its main predators are boa constrictors, humans.

Conew (cottontail rabbit, *Sylvilagus floridanus nigronuchalis*)

The Eastern Cottontail rabbit (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) was probably brought over to the island by Indian settlers thousands of years ago as a source of food. This rabbit, locally known as Conew, has spread all over the island and has become part of our ecosystem. The very adaptable Conew can live in a wide variety of habitats, including Aruba's xeric scrublands, where it typically grazes on weeds and grasses.

The Aruban Conew has a brownish grey color and a distinctive white belly. This white fur extends to the bottom of the tail which becomes visible as the rabbit runs. These rabbits can grow up to approximately 40 centimeters in length over their short lifespan of 3 years. Cottontail rabbits reach reproductive maturity when they are just 2 to 3 months old. A female rabbit, called a doe, finds a suitable nest spot under a shrub or rocks and lines it with fur. She can have an average of 3 to 4 litters per year averaging 5 young each. The doe only visits her young once or twice a day to nurse her babies for a period of 2 to 3 weeks. The

young reach independence at 4 to 5 weeks.

The Aruban Conew is an endangered species and protected by Aruban law. The Conew is thought to have drastically declined due to an increase in human activities, habitat fragmentation and predation by the invasive Boa constrictor as well as feral cats and dogs. However, recently there seem to be more rabbit sightings in rural and wilderness areas and also in the National Park. This could be linked to a recent decline of the invasive Boa population after the long period of drought. As the Conew can reproduce very quickly, a short break in predation pressure can lead to a fast increase of rabbits. Sadly, the Boas are back on the rise again with the truly wet rainy seasons we have recently experienced. This could cause a new decline in the Conew population that was just starting to recover.

These are but a few of Aruba's beautiful inhabitant, which we must all contribute to protect. For more information, visit <https://www.arubanationalpark.org/main/flora-fauna/>

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Visit the island's popular cave sites!



(Oranjestad)—Among the endless sea of dark brown sand and cacti, there are two caves hidden in the outskirts of San Nicolas, in the north-eastern area of the island. These caves, The Quadirikiri cave and The Fontein Cave are open to visitors of the Arikok National Park, so if you ever decide to take an “off-road” tour in the park, be sure to visit these prehistoric caves...and be sure to bring a flashlight!

Quadirikiri Cave

Known for its two chambers accompanied by a skylight, the Quadirikiri Cave is the most popular cave among locals and tourists, as it is easy to walk through and provides great lighting for pictures.

As with all prehistoric or ancient sites, there is always a folk legend that adds to the lore and mystery of the site. The Quadirikiri cave is no different. The most well-known legend behind the cave could be considered as Aruba's first love story, as it tells the tale of the undying love between the chief's daughter and her beloved. As legend would have it, the chief disapproved of his daughter's choice of lover, as he thought him unworthy. Stubborn and filled with anger, the daughter refused to turn away her beloved.

So, the chief decided to lock her up in the Quadirikiri

Cave, in hopes that she would soon calm down and turn away her lover. Her beloved, in turn, was locked away in the Tunnel of Love (Now known as the Huliba Cave).

Through the pathways underneath the Tunnel of Love running up to the Quadirikiri cave, the two love birds found each other, and refused to let each other go. Because of their stubbornness, they both died in the Quadirikiri Cave, their ascending spirits burning two holes in the ceiling of the cave. This is why the cave has two holes through which sunlight passes through to illuminate the chamber.

Though there have been discoveries of Amerindian drawing on the wall, these have mostly been ruined by vandalism. However, the Fontein Cave further up north, provides a better glimpse in prehistoric Amerindian paintings.

Fontein Cave

Longer than the Quadirikiri Cave, the Fontein Cave contains pathways that stretch to the limestone walls further down. Here is also where prehistoric drawings can be seen. Though this cave does not have its own legend, this was speculated to have been occupied—or at least used by prehistoric Arawak settlers on the island for rituals and other spiritual

ceremonies.

The Huliba Cave/ Tunnel of Love

The Huliba Cave, formerly known as the Tunnel of Love, was once open to the public, and was the biggest and most accessible of all three caves. This cave had five chambers, including one that is heart-shaped. This cave had narrow stairs that led to long pathways deep into the cave, with a staircase leading to the exit on the other side. In one of the chambers, there used to be the carving of the Virgin Mary, put there for the protection of the cave.

However, the Huliba Cave has been permanently closed for a few years now, as a way to preserve the bat population that lives in the cave. These Long Tongue Fruit Bats and Insect Eater Bats are very important to the ecosystem of the island. Though this cave is no longer accessible to the public, it surely is interesting to learn more about the history of these caves and the Awarak tribes that resided or utilized them.

Do note that these caves are very dark, humid, hot, and are inhabited by bats. Do wear comfortable clothing and shoes, as the pathways in these caves may be rough and bumpy, and don't forget to bring a flashlight! □



Did you know about... Basic driving rules on Aruba (part 1)

(Oranjestad)—Have you ever felt confused when you're driving on the highways or backstreets of Aruba? Then we present a simple guide to some of the basic rules of Aruban traffic, along with some tips for things to look out for.

Speed limit

Legally, the speed limit on the four-lane highways is 80 km/h. This speed limit also counts for the main roads that are connected to the highways. The minimum speed is 50 km/h. Most people drive around 60 km/h on the main roads and about 70 km/h on the highways. There are also areas that indicate a speed limit on a sign; these are usually around populated and school areas.

The four-lane highways contain the left-lane, also known as the "fast" lane for each direction. Here is where vehicles can drive up to the maximum speed. However, legally it is not permitted to drive for long periods of time on the left lane. This lane is primarily designed for drivers to switch lanes before a roundabout, for example, if your exit on the roundabout is on your far left. The general lane to drive in—both at maximum and minimum speed—is on the right lane.

Roundabouts

Speaking of roundabouts, it is important to know where you have to enter and drive on the roundabout to make your exit. A good rule of thumb is to count the exits starting from your right side. So, exit 1 would be on your right; exit 2 would be straight ahead; exit 3 would be on your far left and exit 4 would lead to the road paralleled to the one you're on, heading in the other direction.

Most roundabouts have these 4 exits, so they are relatively simple. When you're driving on the four-lane highway, it is important to know when to switch to the left lane to make your



exit: if your exit is on your far left (exit 3), then you need to switch to the left lane on the high way before nearing the roundabout so you can take the path that leads you directly to your exit. If your exit is on your right or if you're going straight ahead, you can keep driving in the right lane of the highway.

It's also important to know that vehicles about to enter the roundabout must yield to those already on it. A good rule of thumb is to look out if someone is coming from your left side.

However, other roundabouts can be quite tricky to navigate...

Watty Vos Boulevard (the "paperclip" roundabout)

Probably the biggest roundabout on the island, the "paperclip" roundabout on the Watty Vos Boulevard is one of the trickier roundabouts that could—and has—caused confusion among both tourists and locals. However, once you take a good look at it, it's fairly simple. The basis is just the same as a regular roundabout (left exit? left lane! etc.), but instead of having four different exits like on a regular roundabout, now you have two extra; one on the right and the other on the left side of the roundabout. The rules don't change at all, you

just have to keep an extra eye open.

Airport roundabout

Ah, yes. The infamous airport roundabout. The favorite roundabout amongst local, because of its easy (hard) lanes that never (always) cause confusion among drivers. Sarcasm aside, this roundabout can be tricky to enter, especially when you're driving from the direction of the airport heading. When you're driving away from the airport reaching the roundabout, you'll be faced with three lanes. The far right lane is to take the exit 1 out heading east (right lane of highway). The middle exit is used for exit 1 (left lane of highway),

2 and 3. The far left exit is used to only exit on exit 3 (left lane of highway) and 4.

"Las Americas" roundabout

The Las Americas roundabout is located near the Talk of the Town hotel, west from the airport roundabout. This roundabout may look like a regular roundabout—and for the most part, it is. However, when you are driving from the east going in the direction of town, please take note that there are two exits on your right.

When you're driving towards this roundabout, you'll notice that the road becomes wider, splitting into two lanes. The right lane is used to take the first and second exit on the right. If you want to exit straight ahead, you must drive on the left lane!

It's always scary to drive in new places where the traffic may look and work differently, but once you get it right once, you'll get the hang of it in no time. Additionally, all roundabouts and roads on Aruba have signs and arrows painted on the road to help guide you. So take your time, keep your eyes open and don't forget to wear a seat belt! □



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Casual talk
 - 5 Easy runs
 - 10 Daytona entrant
 - 12 News item
 - 13 Battery end
 - 14 "Otello" composer
 - 15 Gift tag word
 - 16 Cad
 - 18 Pot mender
 - 20 Running bird
 - 21 "Orinoco Flow" singer
 - 23 Tear
 - 24 Layout choice
 - 26 Coin, essentially
 - 28 Writer Fleming
 - 29 Asian sport
 - 31 Suit accessory
 - 32 Donut, in slang
 - 36 Misplayed note
 - 39 Holiday lead-in
 - 40 Border lake
- DOWN**
- 41 Writer Nin
 - 43 Eat away
 - 44 Knight's weapon
 - 45 Good judgment
 - 46 Finish a hole
 - 1 Vessel
 - 2 Asian capital
 - 3 Future oak
 - 4 "— Lasso"
 - 5 Writer Primo
 - 6 Kitchen fixture
 - 7 Coffee makers
 - 8 Natural
 - 9 Roil
 - 11 Bristles at
 - 17 Take a stab at
 - 19 Writer Follett
 - 22 Navy bigwig
 - 24 Flop
 - 25 Golfer's cleek
 - 27 Charged bit
 - 28 Longings
 - 30 Take advantage of
 - 33 Reeves of "Speed"
 - 34 Kick out
 - 35 Stopwatch button
 - 37 Tacit
 - 38 Pants part
 - 42 Catch some z's

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Yesterday's answer

- DOWN**
- 1 Vessel
 - 2 Asian capital
 - 3 Future oak
 - 4 "— Lasso"
 - 5 Writer Primo
 - 6 Kitchen fixture
 - 7 Coffee makers
 - 8 Natural
 - 9 Roil
 - 11 Bristles at
 - 17 Take a stab at
 - 19 Writer Follett
 - 22 Navy bigwig
 - 24 Flop
 - 25 Golfer's cleek
 - 27 Charged bit
 - 28 Longings
 - 30 Take advantage of
 - 33 Reeves of "Speed"
 - 34 Kick out
 - 35 Stopwatch button
 - 37 Tacit
 - 38 Pants part
 - 42 Catch some z's

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9
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40					41	42			
43					44				
45						46			

10-26

A X Y D I B A A X R
is L O N G F E L L O W

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

10-26

CRYPTOQUOTE

K R T N V R M Z U H C H C J P H

U R F Z M J W H Z R K S P U P U R

C R N F H Q R J . — J P R Z U R Q V S Q B
Yesterday's Cryptoquote: I HAVE DECIDED TO STICK WITH LOVE. HATE IS TOO GREAT A BURDEN TO BEAR. — MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

Bitcoin prices have doubled this year and potentially new ways to invest may drive prices higher



Bitcoin is for sale at an Automated Teller Machine at the Westfield Garden State Plaza shopping mall in Paramus, New Jersey, on March 13, 2023.

Associated Press

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS
AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Bitcoin is having another moment. The world's largest cryptocurrency soared to almost \$35,000 this week, marking its highest point in nearly 18 months and more than double the price seen at the start of 2023. The cryptocurrency rocketed from just over \$5,000 each during the start of

the pandemic to nearly \$68,000 in November 2021, according to FactSet, during an era of massive tech growth. Prices came back down to earth during an aggressive series of rate hikes from the Federal Reserve as it battled inflation, and then the collapse of one of the biggest companies in crypto, FTX. When 2023 began, a single bitcoin could be had for less than \$17,000 after los-

ing more than 75% of its value. Investors, however, began returning in large numbers this year as inflation started to cool. And the collapse of prominent tech-focused banks actually led more investors to turn to crypto as they bailed out of positions in Silicon Valley start-ups and other more risky bets. Now, bitcoin is getting another boost on the prospects of creating a much larger pool of investors. Industry advocates say a new way to invest in bitcoin at spot prices, instead of futures, could make it easier for anyone to enter the cryptoverse while lowering some of the well-documented risks associated with investing in cryptocurrencies. There's rising optimism about the possibility of bitcoin exchange-traded funds a pooled investment security that can be bought and sold like stocks potentially being launched. □

Apple raises prices for Arcade gaming subscription service, AppleTV+ streaming



The Apple logo is illuminated at a store in the city center of Munich, Germany, Dec. 16, 2020.

Associated Press

CUPERTINO, Calif. (AP) — Apple Inc. is raising the prices for its AppleTV+ streaming and Arcade gaming plans as well as its bundled Apple One service that includes streaming, music and other subscriptions. Arcade will now cost \$6.99, up from \$4.99. AppleTV+ is now \$9.99, up from \$6.99. Apple News+ will be \$12.99, up from \$9.99 and Apple One will increase to \$19.95 from \$16.95 per month for the individual plan and to \$25.95 from \$22.95 for the family plan. Apple One includes subscriptions for Apple Music, TV, Arcade and 200 gigabytes of iCloud storage. Apple said the price increases will affect the U.S. and "select international markets." □

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24/7

AI-generated child sexual abuse images could flood the internet

By **MATT O'BRIEN** and
HALELUYA HADERO
AP Technology Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — The already-alarming proliferation of child sexual abuse images on the internet could become much worse if something is not done to put controls on artificial intelligence tools that generate deepfake photos, a watchdog agency warned on Tuesday.

In a written report, the U.K.-based Internet Watch Foundation urges governments and technology providers to act quickly before a flood of AI-generated images of child sexual abuse overwhelms law enforcement investigators and vastly expands the pool of potential victims.

"We're not talking about the harm it might do," said Dan Sexton, the watchdog group's chief technology officer. "This is happening right now and it needs to be addressed right now."

In a first-of-its-kind case in South Korea, a man was sentenced in September to 2 1/2 years in prison for using artificial intelligence to create 360 virtual child abuse images, according to the Busan District Court in the country's southeast. In some cases, kids are using these tools on each other. At a school in south-

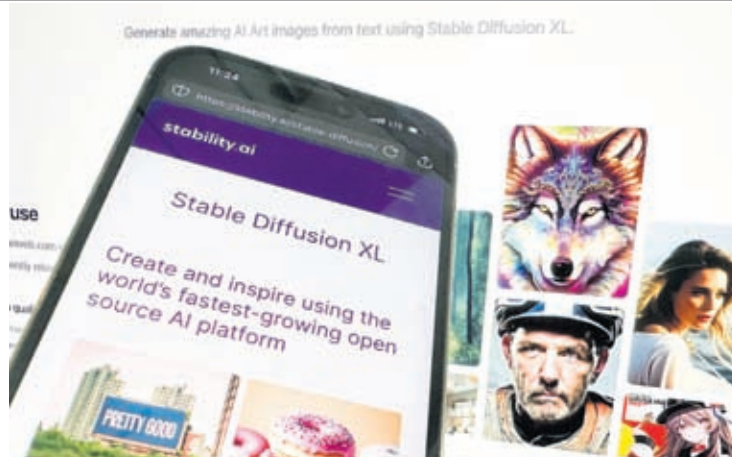
western Spain, police have been investigating teens' alleged use of a phone app to make their fully dressed schoolmates appear nude in photos.

The report exposes a dark side of the race to build generative AI systems that enable users to describe in words what they want to produce — from emails to novel artwork or videos — and have the system spit it out.

If it isn't stopped, the flood of deepfake child sexual abuse images could bog investigators down trying to rescue children who turn out to be virtual characters. Perpetrators could also use the images to groom and coerce new victims.

Sexton said IWF analysts discovered faces of famous children online as well as a "massive demand for the creation of more images of children who've already been abused, possibly years ago."

"They're taking existing real content and using that to create new content of these victims," he said. "That is just incredibly shocking." Sexton said his charity organization, which is focused on combating online child sexual abuse, first began fielding reports about abusive AI-generated imagery earlier this year. That led



In this picture, the desktop and mobile websites for Stable Diffusion are seen, Tuesday, Oct. 24, 2023, in New York.

Associated Press

to an investigation into forums on the so-called dark web, a part of the internet hosted within an encrypted network and accessible only through tools that provide anonymity.

What IWF analysts found were abusers sharing tips and marveling about how easy it was to turn their home computers into factories for generating sexually explicit images of children of all ages. Some are also trading and attempting to profit off such images that appear increasingly lifelike. □

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Narcotics Anonymous
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Fundacion Contra Violencia
Relacional Tel. 583 5400

Centre for Diabetes
Tel. 524 8888

Child Abuse Prevention
Tel. 582 4433

Quota Club Tel. 525 2672

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'The Art of War,' Amy Schumer's memoir are banned in U.S. prisons

By **HILLEL ITALIE**
AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Tens of thousands of books are being banned or restricted by U.S. prisons, according to a new report from PEN America.

The list includes everything from self-help books to an Elmore Leonard novel.

"The common concept underpinning the censorship we're seeing is that certain ideas and information are a threat," says the report's lead author, Moira Marquis, senior manager in the prison and justice writing department at PEN, the literary and free expression organization.

Timed to the start Wednesday of Prison Banned Books Week, "Reading Between the Bars" draws upon public record requests, calls from PEN to prison mailrooms, dozens of accounts from inmates and PEN's struggles to distribute its guide for prison writing, "The Sentences That Create Us: Crafting A Writer's Life in Prison," which came out last year.

Marquis said that the most common official reasons for bans are security and sexual content, terms that can apply to a very wide range of titles.

Michigan's "restricted" list includes Leonard's thriller "Cuba Libre," set right before the 1898 Spanish-American War, and Frederick Forsyth's "The Day of the Jackal," about a professional assassin's attempt to murder French President Charles de Gaulle in the 1960s.

Both novels were cited as a "threat to the order/security of institution."

"One of the books ('Day of the Jackal') deals with the planned assassination of a political leader/methods for engaging in such activities and the second ('Cuba Libre') deals with an individual engaged in various criminal enterprises," a spokesman for the Michigan Department of Corrections told The Associated Press in an email.

"As part of the updated



Author Elmore Leonard appears during an interview at his Bloomfield Township, Mich., home on Sept. 17, 2012, left, and actor-comedian Amy Schumer appears at the premiere of Hulu's Original Series "Life & Beth" in New York on March 16, 2022.

restricted publication process, a new Literary Review Committee has been formed to review items that were previously placed on the restricted publication list, to determine if they should remain or be removed."

Amy Schumer's memoir "The Girl with the Lower Back Tattoo" was flagged by Florida officials for graphic sexual content and for being "a threat to the security, order, or rehabilitative objectives of the correctional system or the safety of any person."

Other books to appear on banned lists: Sun Tzu's "The Art of War," the compilation "Prison Ramen: Recipes and Stories from Behind Bars," Barrington Barber's "Anyone Can Draw: Create Sensational Artwork in Easy Steps" and Robert Greene's self-help best-seller "48 Laws of Power."

"It's a form of control. It's the ultimate form of power of manipulation," Greene said in a statement issued through PEN.

In its report, PEN found parallels between the frequen-

cy of prison bans and book bannings in schools and libraries.

In Florida, PEN has estimated that more than 40% of all library bans took place in Florida in 2022. Meanwhile, the organization found that more than 22,000 books are banned from Florida prisons the highest of any state as of early this year, with some entries dating back to the 1990s. Texas, another frequent site of library bannings, had more than 10,000 prison book bans, second only to Florida.

Incidents of banning are likely much higher than what PEN has compiled, according to "Reading Between the Bars," because record keeping by many prisons is erratic or non-existent.

Kentucky and New Mexico are among more than 20 states that do not keep centralized records.

"Prison book programs have mostly tried to raise awareness locally when prisons implement new censorship restrictions for communities they serve,"

the report reads. "But these programs are largely run by volunteers and struggle to keep up with the demand for books even absent censorship. The upshot is that there have been few nationwide efforts to analyze trends in carceral censorship."

Marquis says that PEN places bans into two categories: content-specific, in which books are banned because of what they say or allegedly say, and content-neutral, in which books are restricted because they are not sent through accepted channels. In Maine, Michigan and other states, prisoners may only receive books through a select number of vendors, whether Amazon.com, a local bookstore or an approved publisher. In Idaho, Amazon and Barnes & Noble are not among the nine approved sellers, which include Books a Million and the Women's Prison Book Project.

Content-neutral restrictions may also apply to the packaging (some federal facilities only permit white

wrapping, Marquis says), and against free or used literature "because the intended recipient did not receive permission from a warden or similar administrator for each specific title mailed to them before the literature arrived," according to Marquis.

A spokesman for the Idaho Department of Correction told the AP in an email that restrictions on packaging had become necessary because of "an increase in the amount of drug-soaked mail being sent to our residents." He added that inmates can receive books and periodicals free of charge from authorized vendors and publishers.

"We believe our guidelines are a reasonable response to a growing problem that puts the health and safety of the people who live and work in Idaho's correctional facilities at risk," he said.

"Reading Between the Bars" follows a report released late in 2022 by the non-profit newsroom the Marshall Project, which found some 50,000 banned prison titles, based on lists made available by 19 states. In 2019, a PEN report explored different levels of prison bans from individuals not permitted to receive a given book to state-wide restrictions and determined that restrictions were both widespread and arbitrary.

"With over two million Americans incarcerated, the book-restriction regulations within the United States carceral system represent the largest book ban policy in the United States," the 2019 study reads in part. "The reality of book banning in American prisons is systematic and comprehensive."

State and federal prison authorities censor content with little oversight or public scrutiny.

Often the ultimate decision-maker about a person's right to read is housed in the prison mailroom. □

Associated Press

Busy Celtics and Bucks drive NBA betting action, but champion Nuggets getting heavy action

By MARK ANDERSON
AP Sports Writer

LAS VEGAS (AP) — The off-season moves by the Boston Celtics and Milwaukee Bucks got the attention of the NBA world and those who bet on the sport, which opened its season Tuesday night.

Boston is the favorite at FanDuel Sportsbook at 37-10 to win the championship and Milwaukee is right behind at 41-10.

They are co-favorites at BetMGM at 4-1 each. At Caesars Sportsbook, those teams along with the reigning champion Denver Nuggets are among the top three teams bet on in terms of numbers of tickets and amount of money wagered.

The Celtics landed Jrue Holiday and traded for Kristaps Porzingis, and Milwaukee traded for Damian Lillard.

"It'll be interesting to see how both teams gel early on," said David Lieberman, who handles NBA betting for Caesars. "But both of them ever since that Lillard trade are probably the two most popular futures. The hype is strong for both



Boston Celtics center Kristaps Porzingis (8) hangs on the rim after a dunk against the New York Knicks during the second half of a preseason NBA basketball game, Tuesday, Oct. 17, 2023, in Boston.

Associated Press

teams." Boston has had the team to win it all recently, but fell in six games to the Golden State Warriors in the 2022 NBA Finals and went out in seven to the Miami Heat in last season's Eastern Conference finals. Milwaukee went all the way in 2021, but the Bucks failed

to get out of the conference the past two seasons.

CHAMPS DRAWING ATTENTION

Even though the Celtics and Bucks won the off-season, most of the money at Caesars has gone to the Nuggets to win the title for the second year a row.

Denver is second to Boston in the total number of tickets.

"The Nuggets are obviously the best in the West right now," Lieberman said. "It's kind of hard to see who beats them, but anything can happen. It will be interesting to see if one of the

Eastern teams can knock them off if they do end up in the Finals."

The Nuggets are the top favorite in the Western Conference at FanDuel at 5 1/2-1 to win the NBA championship. They are 27-10 favorites to win the West.

Denver leads the percentage of tickets at BetMGM to win the championship at 19.1% and highest handle at 32.4%. The handle, which is the money bet, isn't close. The next highest is the Phoenix Suns at 14.1%.

WEMBY GETTING INTEREST

San Antonio Spurs rookie Victor Wembanyama is the most hyped prospect in many years, and he's playing in an organization with a rich history.

The Spurs, however, were picking No. 1 overall for a reason after going 22-60.

"There's a lot of love for the Spurs," Lieberman said. "That's not necessarily surprising. It's the Wemby hype. I think they'll be improved. There are a lot of good teams in the NBA. They'll be competitive, but I don't see them winning the West or winning the championship." □

Tour de France won't finish in Paris for first time in more than a century because of the Olympics

PARIS (AP) — The final stage of next year's Tour de France will be held outside Paris for the first time since 1905 because of a clash with the Olympics, moving instead to the French Riviera.

Because of security and logistical reasons, the French capital won't have its traditional Tour finish on the Champs-Élysées. The race will instead conclude in Nice on July 21. Just five days later, Paris will open the Olympics.

The race will start in Italy for the first time with a stage that includes more than 3,600 meters of climbing. High mountains will be on the 2024 schedule as soon as the fourth day in a race

that features two individual time trials and four summit finishes.

There are a total of seven mountain stages on the program, across four mountain ranges, according to the route released Wednesday.

The race will kick off in the Italian city of Florence on June 29 and will take riders to Rimini through a series of hills and climbs in the regions of Tuscany and Emilia-Romagna. That tricky start could set the scene for the first skirmishes between the main contenders.

Riders will first cross the Alps during Stage 4, when they will tackle the 2,642-meter Col du Galibier.

"The Tour peloton has nev-

er climbed so high, so early," Tour de France director Christian Prudhomme said. And it will just be just a taste of what's to come since the total vertical gain of the 111th edition of the Tour reaches 52,230 meters.

The next big moment for two-time defending champion Jonas Vingegaard and his rivals will be Stage 7 for the first time trial in the Bourgogne vineyards. The first rest day will then come after a stage in Champagne presenting several sectors on white gravel roads for a total of 32 kilometers that usually provide for spectacular racing in the dust.

Tour riders will then head south to the Massif Central

and the Pyrenees, then return to the Alps for a pair of massive stages with hilltop finishes, at the Isola 2000

ski resort then the Col de la Couillole, a 15.7-kilometer (9.7-mile) ascent at an average gradient of 7.1%. □



This photo provided by the Tour de France organizer ASO (Amaury Sport Organisation) shows the roadmap of the men's 2024 Tour de France cycling race.

Associated Press

Long Shot World Series: Diamondbacks vs Rangers is a Fall Classic few saw coming

By **RONALD BLUM**
AP Baseball Writer

Tell the truth: How many people picked Arizona and Texas to meet in the World Series?

A Rangers-Diamondbacks matchup had 1,750 to 1 odds when wagering opened last fall.

But in an era when 12 teams make the playoffs, sustained excellence over the six-month regular season has become a boarding pass, not the journey, leading to a long shot Series that opens Friday night at Globe Life Field.

"Once you get into the big dance, anything can



Texas Rangers manager Bruce Bochy celebrates after Game 7 of the baseball AL Championship Series against the Houston Astros Monday, Oct. 23, 2023, in Houston. The Rangers won 11-4 to win the series 4-3.

Associated Press

happen," Diamondbacks manager Torey Lovullo said before Tuesday night's 4-2 win at Philadelphia advanced Arizona to its first World Series since 2001. "Throw it all out the window. The teams that get in deserve to be in."

All the glamour teams are watching at home: the Los Angeles Dodgers and Atlanta Braves stumbled in the Division Series, defending champion Houston was ousted by Texas, and the New York Yankees didn't even make it to the postseason. Instead, Major League Baseball has its third all-wild card meeting,

a Grand Canyon vs. Lone Star finale of second-place teams played in air-conditioned ballparks under retractable roofs — potentially the first all-indoor Fall Classic. "I thought it would take a little more time," Diamondbacks rookie outfielder Corbin Carroll said. "So to be able to do it in this first year just makes it all the more special."

Both prior all-wild card matchups went seven games. The Los Angeles Angels beat the San Francisco Giants in 2002, and Bruce Bochy's Giants defeated the Kansas City Royals in 2014 for their third title in five years.

Texas and the Diamondbacks are both two years removed from last-place finishes and 100-loss seasons. Arizona is a No. 6 seed and Texas a No. 5.

"Sometimes, one of the last hurdles to get over is that winning feeling, attitude, when you've been losing for a few seasons," Bochy said.

Bochy, 68 and in his 26th year as a big league manager, joined the Rangers last October. He is going for his fourth title, which would tie Walter Alston and Joe Torre for fourth-most behind Joe McCarthy and Casey Stengel (seven each) and Connie Mack (five). All prior managers with three or more are in the Hall of Fame.

"I don't think about me. I'm riding their backs, trust me," Bochy said. "It's unreal that I'm here, to be honest. Sitting at the house for three years, and think here I am going to a World Series. Yeah, that's special. But it's more about them and trying to find a way to get a ring for those guys."

Texas started play as the expansion Washington Senators from 1961-71 and has played 10,028 games without a title (9,964 regular-season games, according to the Elias Sports Bureau, plus 64 in the postseason). □



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